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Brian R Naranjo 01/28/2002 05:52:36 PM From DB/Inbox: Brian R Naranjo

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RELEASED IN PART  
B1, 1.4(D)

Cable Text:  
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TELEGRAM

January 28, 2002

To: SECSTATE WASHDC - PRIORITY  
Action: WHA  
From: AMEMBASSY CARACAS (CARACAS 214 - PRIORITY)  
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, VE  
Captions: None  
Subject: CHAVEZ CALLS CATHOLIC CHURCH A "TUMOR"  
Ref: None

CLASSIFIED BY FREDERICK B. COOK, DCM, REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D)

1. (U) At a protocolary meeting of President Chavez with the Diplomatic Corps February 24, Papal Nuncio Andre Dupuy, speaking as Dean of the Corps on behalf of all its members, expressed the opinion that it would be a "shame" for "radicalization" to jeopardize the "human objectives of the Bolivarian Revolution," such as justice, peace, and the alleviation of poverty." The Nuncio said it was the duty of diplomats to comment on the conditions in the countries they served in.

2. (U) President Chavez replied with a just under two-hour diatribe in which he:

-- Said that parts of the hierarchy of the Venezuelan Catholic Church were "one of the tumors" afflicting the country;

-- Attacked Cardinal Velasco (Archbishop of Caracas) for criticizing the two priests who officiated at a mass attended by Chavez which kicked off the Chavista counter-demonstration;

-- Asserted that the January 23 marches were evidence of the peaceful political process in Venezuela, but insisted, despite all of the evidence to the contrary, that the opposition march was "not as strong as ours, because they will never be as strong as ours. There is no way."

-- Warned the Corps that Venezuela was a sovereign country, asserting that expressions of "concern" were historically a cover for conspiracy and intervention, listing in this regard the overthrow of Allende in Chile, the "blockade" of Cuba and Iraq, the invasion of Guatemala (in 1954) and the destruction of "whole neighborhoods" in Panama to remove the president.

-- Warned the members of the Corps to be objective and not get involved in local politics, noting that he had had to call a head of state (unnamed, but Pastrana of Colombia) to reprimand him for making inappropriate comments on the "El Nacional" affair;

-- Asserted that his 1992 coup attempt had prevented civil war, and told the Corps that what they should really fear is that his revolution not succeed, provoking the masses to violence;

-- Laughed at the efforts of some of his staff to "tame" him and "put their hand on the tiller." "I won't let them," he said, and pointed out that these people were now

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out of government (a possible reference to the dismissal of Ambassador Arcaya and the resignation of Luis Miquilena);

-- Told Foreign Minister Davila to set aside time for each and every Ambassador so that he could answer their questions and be sure that the Muncio was really speaking for the Corps.

-- Labeled Foreign Minister Davila as a "rebel in his own manner" who sacrificed his career as a military officer rather than attend a reception hosted by a woman alleged to be President Carlos Andres Perez's mistress.

Hrinak

Additional Addressees:  
None

cc:

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA  
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
AMEMBASSY QUITO  
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
AMEMBASSY LIMA

Distribution:

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/23/11

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End Cable Text

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